STRIKE ACTION BY DUNNES WORKERS

There is no alternative, says Karen Wall.

Karen Wall (forefront) with colleagues from Dunnes Stores, Kilkenny.

ON JUNE 19TH, Dunnes workers in sixty-two outlets throughout Ireland will go on strike. The strike is not just about conditions for Sunday working, but also about a range of issues which are equally important to the staff of Ireland's largest private sector employer. Karen Wall explains why she and 5,000 of her colleagues are going on strike on Monday week.

"I've been working in Dunnes Stores for ten years now. During that time I've seen the goodwill and the patience of the staff stretched in a way I'd never have thought possible, and finally exhausted. Despite our best efforts, no progress has been made on a number of issues which go to the heart of the relationship between employee and employer.

"We are not looking for anything which hasn't already been accepted by other major Irish retail operators. Our company has been hugely profitable over the last ten years. With an annual turnover in excess of £1 billion, there is no way that what we're looking for could even remotely risk the future profitability or expansion of Dunnes Stores.

"I want the people of Ireland to know that we would not even have considered strike action, if we didn't believe it was the only course left open to us. The company have refused our request to attend conciliation talks on a regular basis and, in all honesty, they have not even attempted to realistically address the genuine concerns of the staff.

"As we face a major strike, we do not underestimate the power of the company. With that in mind, we are calling on the Irish public, whom we have always known to be fair-minded, to support our case when strike action begins on Monday June 19th. We're depending on you."

• This ad has been paid for by Mandate Defence Fund

It's time to let people know just how staff have been treated by Dunnes

1. With 'Zero Hour Contracts' staff have no guarantee of regular work or income.
Under these contracts, which have become much more prevalent in Dunnes, staff must be available to work at all times – but are not guaranteed any work at all. Working hours can vary from zero to thirty-nine. This is not the only activity of this kind in which Dunnes are involved. Thousands of part-time staff are not given their daily finishing time in advance either, which makes life unnecessarily difficult.
Mandate wants the abolition of zero-hour contracts and part-time staff to be guaranteed minimum hours. Staff should also be given their daily finishing time in advance.

2. There is no pension scheme for the sales and clerical staff of Dunnes Stores.
People may find this hard to believe but it's true. The company have offered to introduce a scheme for a small minority of staff and, even then, the benefits fall far short of the norm in the trade.

3. Dunnes have refused point blank to reasonably negotiate.
To date the company have been unwilling to use many recognised industrial relations procedures. They will not agree to attend independent conciliation, with a view to resolving the present dispute. This leaves staff with no alternative to taking strike action.

4. In many stores less than 10% of staff are full-time.
Very few people realise that the vast majority of jobs in Dunnes are part-time. *Mandate wants a significant increase in full-time jobs in all locations.*

5. More work does not mean more pay in Dunnes.
Over the years, many staff employed as sales assistants have been given responsibility for running departments. Extra responsibilities should be rewarded appropriately. In Dunnes, they're not.

6. Compulsory Sunday working in Dunnes.
Dunnes have introduced contracts which make working on Sunday compulsory, and at the flat rate of pay. This move not only jeopardises conditions for Dunnes workers, but also jobs and conditions throughout the retail sector. *Mandate wants all Sunday working to be voluntary, and improved rates to apply.*

7. With Dunnes is it all take and no give?
Dunnes have enjoyed the benefit of nine years of national wage restraint. Provisions for an extra 3% productivity increase were part of the last wage round. Most companies have willingly paid the 3% agreed, in return for productivity concessions. Dunnes have taken the concessions without giving productivity increases.

8. A large % of Dunnes workers don't get sick-pay.
Part-time workers are as likely to get sick as full-time staff. *Mandate wants the sick-pay scheme extended to all part-time staff.*

MANDATE TRADE UNION